

Welcome to AmeriCorps – It's Unlike Anything You've Seen Before Key Concepts Resource Sheet

AmeriCorps History

AmeriCorps State and National was created in 1994. It was signed into law by President Bill Clinton using the same pens that were used in the 1930's to enact the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and in the 1960's to enact the Peace Corps. AmeriCorps carries the legacy of these programs, including the belief that a service corps can better both the member and the community and the practice of having the member take an oath of poverty to serve alongside the people they intend to help.

Streams of Service



AmeriCorps Funding and Structure

AmeriCorps is a federally funded program housed in the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). The program exists because of bi-partisan support. Maintaining this support has become paramount to the program. In 2013 CNCS launched the Mayor's day initiative to get local elected officials to publicly recognize the work of National Service members in their communities. On April 3rd, 2018, more than 5,200 officials – representing more than 216 million Americans – participated in the sixth-annual National Service Recognition Day.



National Service Glossary

- AmeriCorps is pronounced “core” rather than “corpse.”
- **Term** – the commitment of a period of time that a member serves; the term has a start date and an end date and must be served in full to successfully complete AmeriCorps.
- **Position** – the correct term for what an AmeriCorps member serves in (as opposed to a job).
- **National Service member** – an individual serving a part or full time term in a National Service program such as AmeriCorps. Not an employee, intern, or volunteer of either the agency they are serving at (their service site) or the AmeriCorps program that hired them.
- **Ed Award** – short for education award, this refers to the grant which AmeriCorps members earn when they successfully complete a term of service. The education award is held in the National Service Trust until the member applies it to a student loan or towards a higher education institution for payment of educational expenses.
- **Gear** – the shirts, buttons, and other branded clothing or items which designate a member as an AmeriCorps member. Members must wear gear and identify themselves as AmeriCorps members during service.
- **Mentor** – synonym for the member’s supervisor.
- **Position Description** – to be used instead of “job description”; will describe the allowable and intended scope of work for a member.
- **Days of Service** – Nationally recognized days such as Make a Difference Day, Martin Luther King Jr Day of Service, and 9/11 Day of Service and Remembrance in which members are encouraged to serve alongside other national service members from their own program as well as others.
- **Day of the A** – a day of pride for AmeriCorps members to wear their gear, take photos, and share their photos and their story of service on social media.

The Language of National Service

AMERICORPS

Pronounced

AH-MARE-I-CORE

NOT

AMERI-CORPSE



Member Lifecycle

Although each member's experience through their term feels personal and special and unique, there are patterns and a level of predictability; which means that there are things you can plan for.

Most members experience the following phases in a term:

Honeymoon

Idealistic and enthusiastic, members are excited to start service and to do meaningful work. This period usually lasts 4-6 weeks.

Facing Reality

In this phase, members realize this is very difficult work and they may realize that they will not make the amount of impact they had hoped to make or they may realize their limitations. Also, members really experience how living off of the stipend is starting to get painful. Some members may be inclined to quit service and if they do they would be exited negatively without an education award. Mentor the member through this stage to avoid a negative exit.

Overcoming

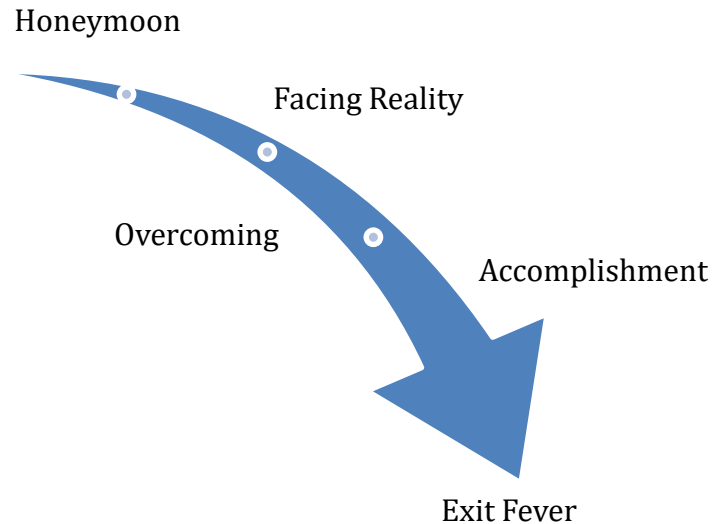
Usually coming in the 3rd quarter, this is the point at which they persevere and can feel proud of overcoming the challenges they have faced. Or, this could be their breaking point. Members who succeed through to this point find that it is difficult but rewarding. If they make it this far, they usually won't quit. This is where members are fully experiencing what they pledged to do in service.

Accomplishment

Finally members see the fruits of their labor and can feel that what they have done is having an impact. They feel proud and cannot believe how fast this term is going by. This is a great time to celebrate and to discuss mutual expectations for the remainder of their term.

Exit Fever

Members are looking towards the exit and are ready to jump into their next exciting opportunity and start the cycle over again. Unfortunately, in the final rush towards the exit sometimes there are mistakes or last minute changes that result in a member exiting early or exiting on a bad note.





Prohibited Activities:

While charging time to the AmeriCorps program, accumulating service or training hours, or otherwise performing activities supported by the AmeriCorps program or CNCS, staff and members may not engage in the following activities:

- a. Attempting to influence legislation; b. Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes; c. Assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing; d. Impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements; e. Engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office; f. Participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials; g. Engaging in religious instruction, conducting worship services, providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship, constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship, maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship, or engaging in any form of religious proselytization; h. Providing a direct benefit to— i. A business organized for profit; ii. A labor union; iii. A partisan political organization; iv. A nonprofit organization that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 related to engaging in political activities or substantial amount of lobbying except that nothing in these 9 provisions shall be construed to prevent participants from engaging in advocacy activities undertaken at their own initiative; and v. An organization engaged in the religious activities described in paragraph 3.g. above, unless CNCS assistance is not used to support those religious activities; i. Conducting a voter registration drive or using CNCS funds to conduct a voter registration drive; j. Providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services; and k. Such other activities as CNCS may prohibit.

AmeriCorps members may not engage in the above activities directly or indirectly by recruiting, training, or managing others for the primary purpose of engaging in one of the activities listed above. Individuals may exercise their rights as private citizens and may participate in the activities listed above on their initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time, and using non- CNCS funds. Individuals should not wear the AmeriCorps logo while doing so.

The AmeriCorps Member Pledge



- ★ I will get things **done** for America—to make people **safer, smarter, and healthier.**
- ★ I will bring Americans **together** to strengthen our **communities.**
- ★ Faced with **apathy**, I will take **action.**
- ★ Faced with **conflict**, I will seek **common ground.**
- ★ Faced with **adversity**, I will **persevere.**
- ★ I will carry this **commitment** with me **this year and beyond.**
- ★ I am an **AmeriCorps member**, and I will **get things done.**



Recommended additional resources:

- NationalService.gov for more information and resources on all National Service programs
- COVID-19 FAQs for AmeriCorps Programs: <https://nationalservice.gov/about-cnacs/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>
- Video about the history of National Service: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/history-national-service-america>
- More information about prohibited activities: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/financial-management/prohibited-activities>
- America's Service Commissions: <https://www.statecommissions.org/>
- Voices for National Service: <https://voicesforservice.org/>
- Service Year: <https://serviceyear.org/>